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Thesis
on Agarthosax.

By

Loel Watkins

of Charlotte County Virginia

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The general term *dropsy* is applied to a preternatural collection of watery or serous fluid, in any natural cavity, of the human system. Under this general head are included several varieties of the disease which, derive their name, for the most part, from the Greek word *vrois* and the name of the part in which this unnatural collection of water is found. *Hydrocephalus* a dropsy of the head, deriving its name immediately from the Greek word, *vrois* and *kephale*. *Hydrothorax* from *vrois* and *thorax*. There is then several forms of the disease differing from one another, only, as to the part in which they are seated. Many of the following remarks therefore, although intended to apply particularly to *Hydrothorax*, will be also applicable to other forms of the disease.

To account for the manner in which the disease arises (as it is needless that, according to a law of our nature, the different cavities of our body have their surfaces continually moistened by the effusion of watery or serous fluids, this fluids are again reabsorbed by the absorbents and carried to different parts of our system. The action of the exhalants and absorbents is always balanced during the continu-

Hydrothorax

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men of health, so that there is found in the different cases no more of this fluid than is necessary to lubricate their surfaces. An interruption to this equilibrium of action is what gives rise to the disease. It is very easily perceived that this equilibrium may be deranged in two different ways; first by a diminished exhalation or diminished absorption.

The first and increased exhalation is produced by angina corruption to the return of blood from the different parts of the lungs to the heart. Hence it is that schirousities in the right Ventricle are known to have frequently produced the dropsy.

The fact that persons subject to edematous swellings of the lower extremities, always have this effect increased, by standing in an erect posture adds some confirmation to the above remark. In this situation only the weight of the blood is opposed to its return, yet its effects are very readily perceived.

Schirousities in the Liver are also known to have produced the disease. It is stated by Cullen, that although no higher authority could be produced, that schirousities of

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however alone are the only causes of this kind, production of the disease. The experience of other highly respectable physicians however, proving the error of this opinion. It is well ascertained that schirrocities in other viscera, as also, tumors forming obstructions in different parts of the body frequently give rise to the Dropsy.

I diminishes also the power of the fluid poured out by the exhalations mentioned as another cause, or manner in which the Dropsy arises. This we think is owing to a local, or general weakness of the system. The frequent instances of Dropsy in persons of weak debilitated habits, especially after long confinement, is urged as a proof of this opinion. Paralytic limbs which so might naturally be suspected to be affected with this weakness are also frequently subject to this oedematous swelling. In this way we account for the morbus coarctans of this disease following an uncommonly of the digestive organs which, by impairing the movement of the body, by vitiating the blood, ^{and} its excretion is all the agents. The use of spiritous liquors said Dr. Blackall greatly contributes to this incurable taint, & independently of this effect

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has been thought by many, capable of exciting a true dropsy.

Leaving this very imperfect account of the morbid action which the disease arises, we now pass on to a short diagnosis of the Hydrothorax. This indeed must be a most difficult task, for the most experienced physician is sometimes puzzled to distinguish one disease from another.

The Hydrothorax generally commences with a dull heavy pain in the lower part of the thorax, sometimes compared by those afflicted with it, to a heavy weight in that part of the breast. A difficulty of breathing quickly follows which sometimes terminates in suffocation and death of the patient. Palpitation of the heart, inability to lie in a usual posture, sudden starting from sleep, great sleep & numbness particularly of the upper extremities are the symptoms of Hydrothorax. No one of these circumstances however can be taken as positively conclusive. Our diagnosis is to be formed not from one but from a combination of symptoms. A pale Sallow face, a dull moribundus, rather than a Languis countenance, also insinuates the existence of the disease. The pulse is generally quick

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irregular intermitting & frequently febrile. If the urino accompa-
nying these symptoms be high colored & scanty, if a discharge
in the commencement afterwards much, & if the patient
usually if all these symptoms continue to increase & become
more & more troublesome to the patient we may conclude
on the existence of *lymphoma*. The legs of the patient are
generally oedematous at night, the patient generally feels more
uneasy on one side than the other, and perhaps more ease
on his back than in either position. A fluctuation of air
in the chest, perceived by the patient himself or by the
physician is the most certain of all symptoms.
Great attention and care should always be paid to this
part of our duty. The young physician should be par-
ticularly careful in forming correct opinions as to the nature
of discharge; let him then be guided by the experience
of the aged, and his labours must eventually be crowned with
success.

As soon as we clearly ascertain the existence of *lymphoma*
the remedies are to be promptly applied. It is said by some
most Division that surgery of the breast is entirely without

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In control of our power. It is called the *typhoid* of medicine, a reproach to our lapses. But the experience of those who have seen the error of this opinion & belong to the *typhoid* is variable. In most other forms of *typhoid* - so unyielding, to remedy recovery, has the disease forced even in the hands of the most skillful, that no opening must be left unwatched nor what is needed.

In our treatment the cause, symptoms and duration of the disease must be attended to, as well as the age, sex and constitution of the patient. Circumstances too tedious to be particularly detailed in this place. Indeed as Dr. Moore very justly observes, it is entirely unnecessary to me one need be told (before parting) that a *typhoid* of the standing is more difficult of cure than, one of recent origin, that the young recover from *typhoid* that would kill the aged; that persons of strong constitution stand a better chance of recovery, than those whose constitutions have been worn out by long continued dissipation.

In the treatment of *typhoid* the first object should be to

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evacuate the fluid giving rise to the disease & how we should endeavor to prevent its reaccumulation. As to the course of treatment here to be pursued there is no belief but little difference of opinion. At least among physicians of our own country, there has been a singular coincidence of opinion in this respect. We attribute this unanimity to a successful experience, and shall therefore content ourselves by laying down the plan of treatment generally followed by practitioners of our own country.

By the disease sometimes appears of a decided inflammatory character, and at other times not particularly so. In the former of this nature it is necessary that some attention should be paid to this subject. Dr. Blackall in his treatise on dropsy has presented a number of cases, or series of experiments which he thinks afford a certain criterion of the nature of the disease. The urine says this learned physician affords a certain test as to the character of this disease; being like the blood, coagulable by heat when the disease is of an inflammatory character. Certainly the urine should be strictly attended to in this disease; but

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suction, to exchange
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Topical bloodletting
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agreed by some authors, Physicians of his country, would be very
willing to exchange the pulse, for any other evidence of inflam-
mation. In short our opinion in this respect should be formed
not from the pulse alone, but from the appearance of the
arm and every other symptom of inflammatory action.

As a general rule, Physicians agree that bloodletting is
the most proper remedy the commencement of the disease
in high inflammatory cases, no remedy can be compared
to *venae sectionis*. It equalizes excitement & keeps arterial
action, thus it becomes a most powerful remedy, in bygone
times should always be careful however not to prostrate
the system by the use of the lancet. Repeated bleedings
should be performed to such quantities, drawn at once,
as would reduce the strength of the patient.

Topical bloodletting, has also been employed. As small
quantities taken in this way are frequently in other dis-
eases more advantageous than larger quantities from
the arm it may perhaps be useful, though the belief the
practice is not very common. — Blisters and leeches
have also been used with no little benefit.

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books have also been preserved with no letter script: a copying
 circulation of watery fluid has followed their administration. In
 view their use must be left to the discretion of the practitioner:
 they have at the present day given place to cathartics.

If the utility of this class of articles in dropsy no one can
 be ignorant, who is at all acquainted with the practice of medi-
 cine: the most drastic articles of this class were most com-
 monly used by the ancients. The activity of their operations,
 the rapidity with which the water is accumulated after their
 administration, & the consequent repetition of this remedial
 error them altogether inadmissible in many cases. However
 the disease be not removed by them, it must certainly be pro-
 ved, and a debility, particularly of the digestive organs must
 thereby on this account we generally prefer the milder ar-
 ticles of this class. The Diuretic ^{or} in continuation with low Galap
 is very favorable prescription, with many practitioners. Besides its
 diuretic effect its stools are copious and watery. This circumstance
 makes it preferable to many other articles. It is generally given
 in the dose of one dram of the former & ten or fifteen grs of the latter
 any of the other saline preparations are also used but the one
 just mentioned is the most common.

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to shew not pass over this elop, without mentioning the
 Ratanum, a resin, of the very highest quality. That innume-
 rable condiments of the intestines sometimes accompanying dropsy
 is perhaps more certainly overcome by this than any other
 article. There cannot be found say Dr. Ferrius a more cer-
 ain prescription for the purpose of removing the urgent
 symptoms of Hydrops than Ratanum. It often procures
 an immediate relief, by copious and frequent urines, stercor-
 eal discharges, while its action is occasionally manifested
 by an increase of urine. With this as with other articles
 it is proper to commence by small doses which should
 be gradually increased. Commencing with a six-
 twentieth of a grain, if the extract it may sometimes be in-
 creased to the extent of five or six grains a day without
 any inconvenience. Nearly allied to this is the Colton-
 Hygroma. Its certainty of operation, together with the
 facility of its administration should render it an
 article of more general use. It is said to be useful
 in a sluggish condition of the bowels because it does not
 operate like Scammony, Gamboge or Aloe.

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Leaving this clasp of remedies (which perhaps we ought to say
 we now pass on to another, a clasp of remedies long ago em-
 ployed for the purpose of evacuating the water of the system, they
 are left apt to weaken the system, and some prepare it for
 administration of tonics. The honey might moreover very pro-
 bably be supposed to afford an easy outlet for the tropical
 humors. These circumstances very early induced practitioners
 to turn their attention to this clasp of remedies & have rendered
 it performed their great utility.

As of others many of this clasp of remedies have also been em-
 ployed in Syphilis, our intention however is only to mention a
 few commencing with the Squill — Three different prepara-
 tions of this article are found in the shops, each perhaps equally
 applicable to the disease, but as it is most conveniently adminis-
 tered in pills than in any other form, it is more commonly thus
 than in any other way. As this article affects some persons
 more easily than others, it is of no small importance to ascertain in
 each instance the proper dose. In order to accomplish this end
 the patient commences with a very small quantity and gradually

[illegible]

across the line until the desired effect, or some degree of insensibility
 is produced. Under this case we may expect benefit instead of dis-
 apt to result from the use of the quill. In cases of obstructed vision
 where the quill alone has no effect we should combine a small
 quantity of Calomel. — No power of cure can be expected in obstructed vision as
 all its direct effect is well known we may therefore place the
 greatest confidence & expect the greatest benefit from this remedy.
 Another diuretic much used in Hydrophoria is digitalis, a some-
 what for some has been varying in the medical world. A contra-
 diction of opinion as to the utility of digitalis in Hydrophoria exist-
 ing at the present day. The weight of authority however de-
 cides preponderates in favour of its efficacy. The infusion is
 a more easily is perhaps the most effectual manner of admin-
 istering it. The dose is from one to two drams given three or
 four times a day. To derive full benefit from the remedy
 the quantity taken should be regularly increased. This should
 always be done with caution for the action of the article
 sometimes slow or does not develop itself immediately often
 applications, being to preascanting of constitution more
 even very small doses may produce insensibility or

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absorbing effects such as prostration of strength, nausea
pain in the head, & over the eyes, purverted vision vomiting
was a birth. When these symptoms follow the use of this
unity it should be discontinued immediately.
The virtues of *Santhares*, *Chichinans autumnalis*, as also
Risso Garlic and other diuretics might here be noticed, but
we think it unnecessary -

In weak and debilitated conditions of the system it will
be necessary to administer tonics - they may be used either by
giving them alone, or in union with some diuretic. The
latter mode has been found very useful in many cases -
Under this condition of the system weak gin and water spa-
ringly taken has been found a very useful and no doubt a very
agreeable remedy to many, as a tonic the cold bath may in
certain circumstances be employed, it should however be em-
ployed with caution, and not until the system has recovered
some degree of vigour by an assistant to the remedial gen-
tle exercise in the open air may be advised. By exercise
alone said Dr. Cullen may despair have been cured.
If all these remedies fail there is still another to which we

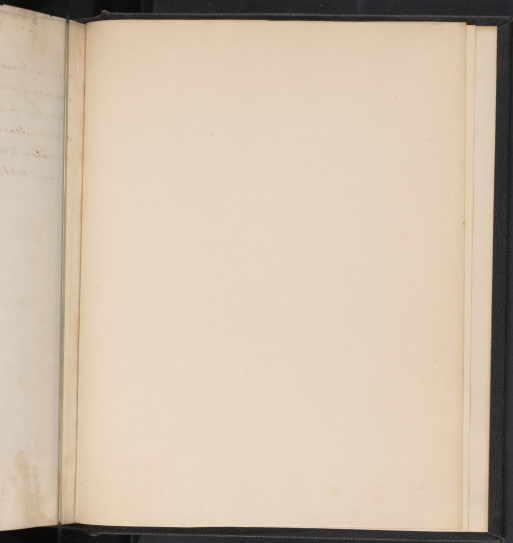
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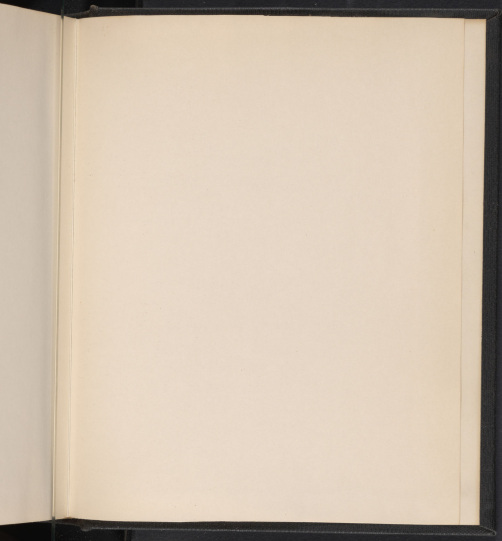
ware may be had I mean parenthesis of the thorax
low aversity of opinion prevails as to the utility of this
aid, that if it self, it is competent to the relief of
gout, I cannot believe; but that it may prove
an auxiliary to other means employed in the cure
I cannot doubt.

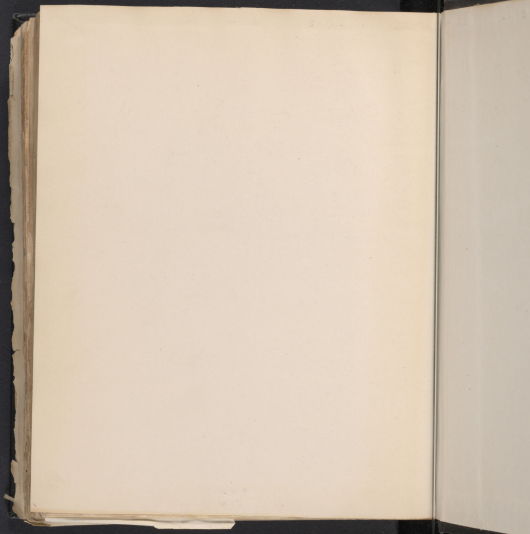
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